

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)

1. What is Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)?

MERS is a respiratory illness that affects a person's lungs and breathing. It's caused by a virus (germ) called "Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus" or MERS-CoV for short. Coronaviruses are common. Yet, MERS-CoV is unlike other coronaviruses found in people before. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is still learning about MERS.

2. How does MERS spread?

It has shown to spread between people who are in close contact, like caring for or living with a person that has MERS. That's how some healthcare workers and household contacts have gotten sick in other countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, and Kuwait.

3. What are the signs of MERS?

Some people only get mild respiratory illness. Most people have severe respiratory illness and get these symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

About one out of three people with MERS has died.

4. How is MERS treated?

There is no treatment for MERS right now. Medical care helps ease MERS symptoms. The CDC is working on a vaccine.

5. How can you prevent the spread of MERS?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. Help young children do the same. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not on hand.
- Cover your nose and mouth with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Limit close contact, like kissing and sharing cups or utensils, with people who are sick.
- Clean surfaces that are touched often, like toys and doorknobs.



Key Points:

- The risk of getting sick with MERS is very low in the United States
- The first and only case in the U.S. was found in Indiana on May 2, 2014
- MERS spreads between people who are in close contact
- Washing your hands is the best way to prevent MERS

For more information:

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/>

California Department of
Public Health
www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo

Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/faq.html>

6. Is it safe to travel to countries where MERS has been found?

Yes. The CDC does not suggest changing travel plans to countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula. The current CDC travel notice is an Alert (Level 2), which gives safety measures for travelers.

The alert advises travelers going to provide health care to use CDC's infection control practices and to monitor their health closely. All other travelers are advised to follow common hygiene practices, such as hand washing and limiting contact with sick people.

7. What if you recently traveled to countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula and got sick?

If within 14 days after traveling to this area you get a fever and signs of respiratory illness, like a cough or shortness of breath, see your healthcare provider and mention your recent travel.

8. Are you at risk for MERS in the United States?

People should monitor their health if they've had close contact with someone who has a fever and signs of respiratory illness, like a cough or shortness of breath, after recent travel to a country in or near the Arabian Peninsula.

Countries where MERS has been found

Countries in the Arabian Peninsula

- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates
- Qatar
- Oman
- Jordan
- Kuwait

Countries where MERS was found after someone traveled to the Arabian Peninsula

- United Kingdom
- France
- Tunisia
- Italy
- Malaysia
- United States of America



For information about cases and deaths by country, visit:

World Health Organization (WHO)

http://www.who.int/csr/don/archive/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/

CDCP-ACDC-0028-01 (05/07/14)